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ABSTRACT

An overview of the literature of listening illustrates the lack of sufficient research in this area. A 1955 survey of curriculum guidebooks and bulletins for the inclusion of listening demonstrates the effect of limited research: most documents devoted anywhere from two to six pages to listening in elementary through secondary school levels. In another survey of 7,762 curriculum documents included in the ERIC datafiles, only 4.5% mentioned listening for various grade level clusters, and a close inspection of curricular materials housed at the 1980 Curriculum Development Library reveals considerable differences between the treatment of listening and the treatment of the other language arts. The attitudes underlying these differences may be reflected in the documents themselves. For example, the inclusion of listening appeared to be an afterthought in some of the material. Many documents also treated listening in vaguer terms than other language arts. In a final example of the lack of attention given to listening, several documents included the significance of listening in their philosophy statement, but few visibly reinforced this goal. Because research indicates that listening comprehension augments reading comprehension, it is becoming increasingly important for professional educators to incorporate listening skill development into the curriculum. (HOD)

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LISTENING AND READING: A HISTORICAL SURVEY

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Listening and Reading: What Research Indicates

The interrelatedness and interdependence of the four language arts are readily accepted by professional educators. However, research has shown listening has been neglected in research in proportion to the frequency of its use. Adults spend 45% of their time listening and only 16% reading (Rankin, 1928). On the average, children also spend a majority of their class time, 57.5%, listening (Spache, 1963). This article will focus attention on the listening process, identify its place in the curriculum for the past 20 years, and discuss research findings concerning the relationship between listening and reading.

What is listening? It is commonly thought of as the physiological act of hearing, which may or may not involve language. In order to

precisely discuss the purpose of recognizing and interpreting linguistic symbols and noises, educators felt a need for a more exact term. For that reason, Brown (1950) and associates introduced the term "auding" to refer specifically to spoken symbols. Lundsteen (1971) defines listening as a process which involves physiological activity, auditory discrimination, recognition of spoken symbols, concentration on materials presented, comprehension, and interpretation according to previous knowledge. It is the "process by which spoken language is converted to meaning in the mind" (p. 9). For the purposes of this paper, the term listening will be referred to in accordance with Lundsteen's definition.

The importance of listening has been recognized throughout the ages. Between approximately 40 and 120 A.D., Plutarch, the Greek biographer and historian, wrote, "Know how to listen and you will profit even from those who talk badly" (Wagner, 1957, p. 247).

Listening skills are of vital importance in everyday communication. Transmission of information alone is insufficient. Reception must also occur to communicate, with listening being a primary means by which communication is accomplished. Communication is an essential part of our society. Our frequent exposure to radio and television also creates a need for effective listening skills, whether it is the need to be a well informed individual, or to make intelligent judgments. Through such media we encounter persuasive politicians, editorialists, commentators, community members, preachers, and salespeople. All such encounters offer the opportunity for critical thinking as a direct result of listening.

In order to achieve maximum intellectual, emotional, social and

economic success, one must develop proficient listening skills. Listening skills may affect ideas, ideals, attitudes, moral codes, value systems, self concept, and philosophy of life. The ability to communicate and work effectively with others, lead and follow effectively, and make person observations, decisions, and judgments are also affected by listening skills. Therefore, the development of listening skills augments the development of human traits.

Not only are listening skills vital to the development of human traits, but they are essential to education itself. Listening is a major means by which learning occurs. A considerable amount of information to be learned in the content of various disciplines is presented orally. When an activities or "hands-on" approach is used, the means by which we incite action is often through oral directions. Thus the need for proficient listening skills is apparent. This notion has received much acceptance (Czekanski, 1974; Halley, 1975; Lundsteen, 1976; Weaver, 1974). However, recognizing a need is insufficient; action must be taken before a situation can be improved. Walker (1955) reported the nature of the problem to be a lack of sufficient research. According to Walker, a steering committee was formed in the Nashville public schools to develop a communication curriculum. When the committee approached listening, little research was available. As a result, the schools conducted their own tests and experiments to develop the needed materials. A logical conclusion follows: how can a skill be taught when its components and attributes are virtually unknown?

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Duker's (1963) overview of the history of listening research exemplifies the lack of sufficient research. In the 1920's two doctoral dissertations were written on listening during which time Rankin (1928) studied the frequency of its use. In the 1930's, only five dissertations on listening were written. The 1940's yielded 11 dissertations and covered topics such as the effectiveness of reading and listening at different rates of speed, and an analysis of the listening process. By 1949, research in listening was behind reading over 8,000 studies (Keller, 1960). The 1950's proved to be somewhat more productive with 88 dissertations. During this time period, listening was found to be a skill that could be taught. Hence, studies evolved concerning the effectiveness of teaching listening. The relationships between listening and academic gains, and listening and reading began to come into view in the 1950's and 1960's. Research in the 1960's through the 1980's has been cyclic, presenting support to former questions and adding new findings.

LISTENING'S LOCUS IN CURRICULUM

Heilman's (1955) survey of curriculum guidebooks and bulletins for the inclusion of listening, demonstrates the effect of limited research. He found most documents devoted anywhere from two to six pages on listening in elementary through secondary levels. Two documents failed even to cover listening. Of those documents including listening, suggestions for implementation were general to the point of offering no concrete guidelines for teaching. Heilman also found the importance of listening was not denied, however, it was not viewed as significant in curriculum guides. It should be noted that research

in listening was just beginning to blossom during the time of Heilman's survey.

In order to bring Heilman's survey up to date, this author conducted a search of the ERIC data files for current trends. Of the 7,762 curriculum documents listed in ERIC, 4.5% mentioned listening for various grade level clusters. To determine the amount of attention given to listening in complete curriculums, guides for grades K-12 were reviewed. Given the restriction of grades K-12 versus various grade level clusters, only .4% of the ERIC data files included listening. Because the percentage was so small, it was possible to graph actual counts of documents for the years 1960-1981. As shown in Figure 1, the emphasis in listening in terms of published curriculum documents is cyclic, not unlike the previously mentioned findings of Duker (1963).

(Insert Figure 1 here)

To comfirm the findings, the 1980 Curriculum Development Library was reviewed for documents including listening in grades K-12. This library was available only for 1980, and subsumed documents from 1970-1980. Counts of these documents were quite similar to those found in ERIC as shown in Figure 2. Because of the small emphasis given to listening in curriculum documents, grade level clusters were reviewed in the 1980 Curriculum Library. As revealed in Figure 3, findings indicate a greater emphasis in listening exists. However, such attention has been limited to grade level clusters and has not been extended throughout the K-12 curriculum.

(Insert Figures 2-3 here)

Thirty-five documents from 21 of the 50 states dating from 1967-

1981 were closely examined. The amount of attention given to listening ranged from approximately 1% to 21%. Total curriculum documents devoted an average of seven percent to listening. The above percentages should be considered approximations as some documents included only three to four sentences, while others devoted entire sections to listening. Thus, the amount of attention given to listening in the curriculum has changed relatively little in the past 25 years.

What factors can be attributed to the lack of change? A close inspection of the documents revealed a considerable difference between the treatment of listening and the treatment of the other areas of the language arts, namely, reading, writing and speaking. This difference may be attributed to the attitude reflected by the document. For example, the following statement was written on the teacher self-evaluation checklist of the Oregon Department of Education, "Includes listening whenever possible in instruction" (1977, p.44). Given the entire context, the inclusion appeared to be that of an afterthought. Still another document belittled the potential of developing listening skills by implying its purpose was to enable students to follow routines and overcome habits (Vermont Department of Education, 1978). Fortunately these guides represented the minority.

Several documents discussed the importance of listening, assigning it a "prominent place" in the curriculum (Smith, 1980, p.7). Certainly the philosophy of the document may affect the amount and quality of actual implementation. It would seem logical that a document which emphasizes the value of a subject has a greater chance of implementation than one that does not.

Yet another factor which may be relevant concerning the lack of

change in documents lies in the level of specificity. Fourty-six percent of the reviewed documents covered reading and writing in great detail, from phoneme-grapheme relationships in reading to the use of specific parts of speech in writing, while listening covered broader areas such as paying attention and listening for appreciation. Documents that treated listening in vaguer terms than other language arts areas suggest a reoccuring malady of the past as suggested by Heilman (1955), i.e., insufficient guidance for actualization. The remaining 54% demonstrated a balanced treatment between listening and the other language arts. Even in these documents, a greater emphasis was placed at the elementary than at the secondary level. The included listening skills required a relatively low level of cognition, focusing on explicit comprehension such as following directions, stating sequence and recalling details.

A final difference concerning the treatment of listening was observed through the document's philosophy. Several documents included the significance of listening in their philosophy statement; yet this goal was not visibly reinforced. Those documents that incorporated listening in all areas of the language arts impressed the reader with the seriousness of intent. Two such documents include those developed by the Wyoming State Department of Education, 1967, and the Boulder Valley School District, 1980. One document went so far as to suggest:

> A good listening program is coordinated throughout the curriculum and is not limited to language arts exercises. The techniques of listening are just as vital to science,

> mathematics, social studies, art, and other disciplines (Alabama State Department of Education, 1976, p. 10).

The above quote exemplifies the contention of this author. Listening skills are essential and deserve a balanced incorporation throughout the K-12 curriculum. There is little evidence this is occurring today. Of all the listings in the ERIC data files including listening, only two documents were outside the area of langauge and the language arts; namely, music and social studies (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 1967, and the Grosse Pointe Public School System, 1976). Although evidence of support for including listening is somewhat limited, it does exist. Czekanski (1974) discussed the importance of listening in science for strengthening questioning, experimenting, observing, concluding and communicating techniques.

RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS

Due to the implications of current research findings, the need to increase listening's emphasis in the curriculum is revealed. The processes involved in listening and reading comprehension are similar (Kintsch and Kozminsky, 1977). Direct training in listening not only improves listening comprehension skills (Canfield, 1961; Lewis, 1953; Trivette, 1961), but has been shown to have a high correlation with reading (Duker, 1965; Guthrie, 1976; Tuman, 1980). Not only is a high correlation thought to exist, but instruction of specific listening skills is thought to transfer to reading skills (Sticht, Beck, Hauke, Kleiman, & James, 1974). Although the findings are not conclusive, research indicates improving listening comprehension has a positive

effect on reading. These research studies imply that the importance of listening should be placed close to the importance of reading.

CONCLUSION

According to Lundsteen (1971), listening elicits the following critical thought processes: organizing messages, making comparisons, defining, assigning sequence, predicting, seeing cause-effect relationships, critically evaluating, appreciating and making application of that which is heard. These are the processes used in virtually every discipline, the most obvious being reading. Because research indicates that listening comprehension augments reading comprehension, it is this authors conjecture that professional educators utilize all available tools, i.e. incorporating listening skills in the curriculum for the development of proficient readers.

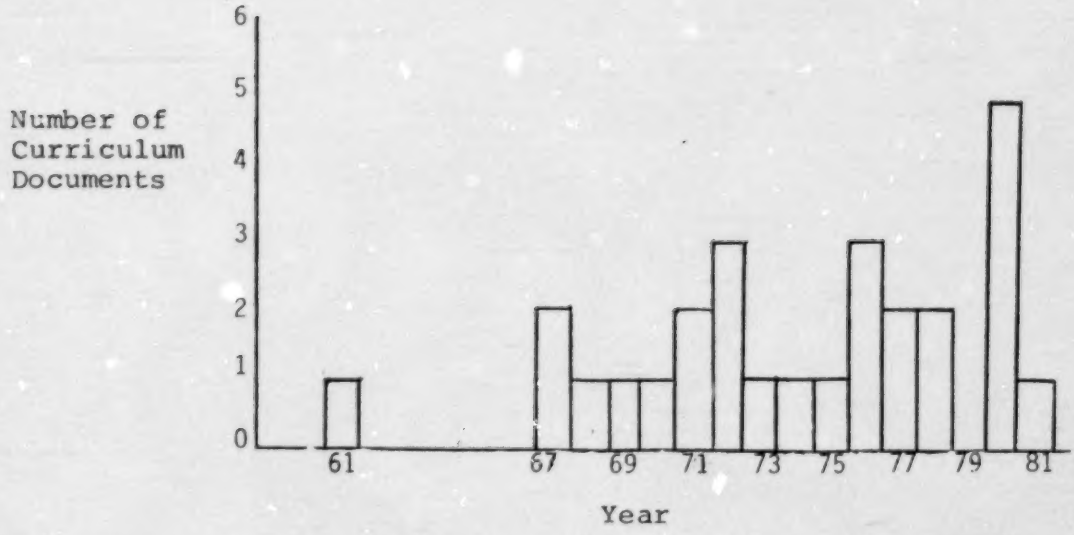

Figure 1. Trends of Listening in Curriculum Guides K-12
ERIC data file

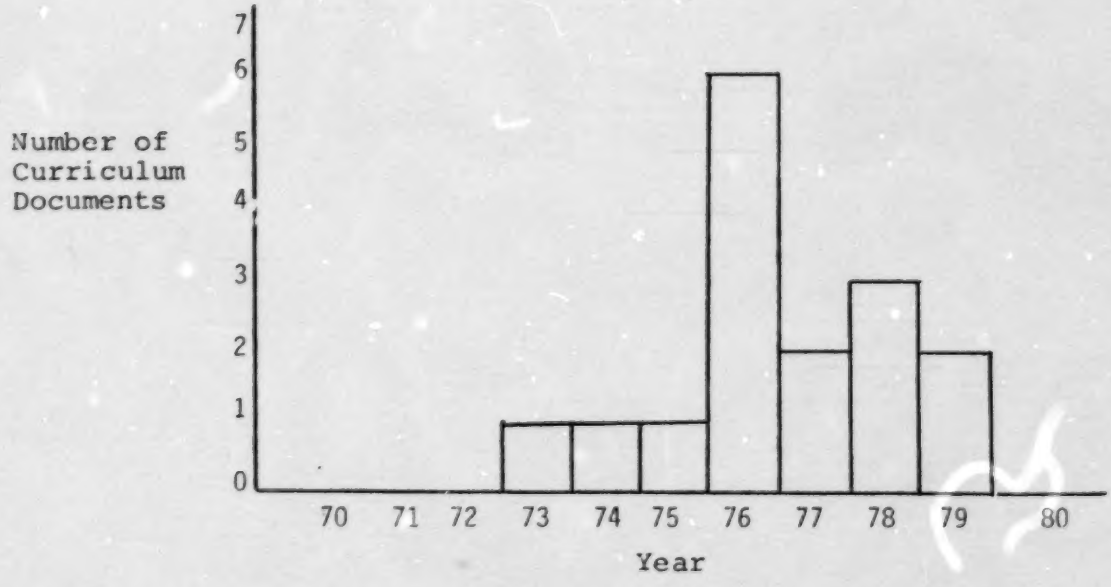

Figure 2. Trends of Listening in Curriculum Guides K-12
1980 Curriculum Development Library

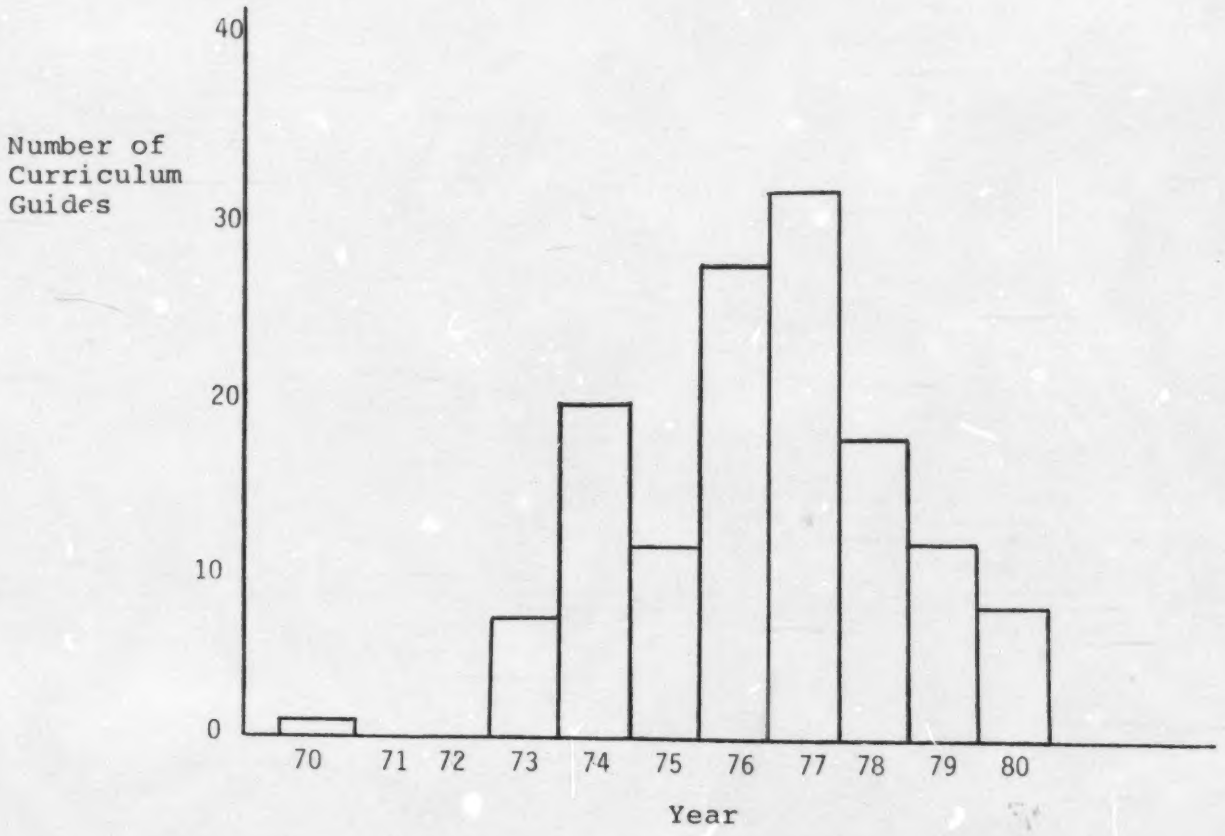

Figure 3. Trends of Listening in Curriculum Guides, Separated in Grade Clusters, from the 1980 Curriculum Development Library.

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